Communication Approaches of Beauty and Health Influencers in Social Media

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Abstract

"Communication Approaches of Beauty and Health Influencers in Social Media" is an article employing qualitative research through content analysis, in-depth interview, data collection from electronic media and other relevant sources. The result has shown that the communication strategies of online influencers, who have aimed to share their knowledge, experience, and expertise on social media, require creativity, continuity and appropriate communication channels. This is meant to be suitable with the exposure behavior of the target group. What is also important is the sincerity of the content that must focus on the benefits of the audience as well as show a strong attitude in being a good example. Moreover, these online influencers have expected to receive positive response from the followers in return. However, they must further be careful of the content presented and must not lead to the creation of false beliefs or for the purpose of any outcome which is for the personal benefit of the business owner.

Keywords: 1) influencer 2) social media 3) follower 4) communication strategy 5) personal brand image

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Background and Significance

Online media is widely used in this current 21st century as an alternative open-channel of communication. It is mostly employed to follow the news, to communicate between sender and receiver, to forward story of their own interest and/or in the interest of society. This has consequently led to a massive change in the behavior of "using media" of Thai people. We have had to admit that, in 2020, all mainstream media such as newspapers, radio, and television stations, had tried to shift the direction of their business to adjust to this change. They have moved and expanded the communication platform to social media. The adjustment has been aimed to increase an opportunity in presenting information to reach a group of people who have changed their behavior of media exposure.

In addition to the consideration of online media usage for information consumption, another aspect that the researcher finds interesting is the usage of social media as a channel for self-promotion, and organization and business promotion by hiring online media influencers. The purpose of using these online influencers is to share knowledge and experience through a variety of communication strategies to reach and build engagement with their followers. This tactic helps to construct a positive personal brand image which can affect the credibility of the business and products owned and/or managed by these influencers.

Objective of Research

To study the strategies of using social media as a communication channel for creating the image of online influencers who have currently been an executive or brand owner.

Scope of Research

This research has focused on studying and analyzing communication strategies via online media to establish an image of being an online influencer. The samples for this study have been executives and/or brand owners. The research has aimed at the sample group who has consistently produced contents and interact with a group of followers to obtain information from their actual work. Those criteria for choosing the samples have been:

• the samples have been online influencers,

• the samples have been executives of an organization/brand which has been well-known,

• the samples have employed social media as a channel to communicate, and

• the samples have obtained a group of followers on social media channels.

The researcher has collected data and information from the document, and performed literature review as well as in-depth interviews for 1 year during 30th of September 2019 to 30th of September 2020.

Expected Results

1. To suggest a strategy for applying social media as a communication channel to create an image of online influencers.

2. To apply the knowledge gained from these professionals for further academic work such as teaching and future research.

3. To provide knowledge arising from

this research as a guideline for academics or those who are interested to develop other aspects and direction of study.

Related Research Papers

• Philosophy about influencer

• Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory

• Conceptual framework for building personal branding.

• Concept of image.

The important conceptual frameworks have summarized that influencers have been famous on social media as well as have been trusted by consumers and referred to for determining values, behaviors or attitudes in social media (Anektaweepon and Rerksirinukul, 2013, as cited in Ritweeradej ,2017, p.5) The classification of online influencers can be divided into several types. This research, however, has defined this classification according to Wongrienthong (2018) who has classified influencers by the size of their follower group. Wongrienthong's three major groups of influencers are: 1) celebrity/mass publisher who have a large number of followers that can be hundreds of thousands to millions, thus the popularity and reputation is the most prominent factor of this group; 2) key opinion leader/professional publishers/specialist, who have fewer followers than the first group but the follow-up level may reach the hundreds of thousands, which may come from certain interests such as specialized content of being an expert or giving opinions on certain subjects that build a large base of followers; and 3) micro influencer who will not be able to make a broad level of awareness like the above two groups but can consitute a

cognitive stimulation in particular subject to be more recognized in broader society.

Understanding the factors that affect perception is a significant cause in motivating recognition to create change in thought, attitude, behavior of online influencers, and an impulse that will result in a feeling of interest. The researcher has chosen Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, which describes the hierarchy of human needs (Fraser, 2007, p.69), to analyze and support the research process. Maslow has ordered needs into basic needs, need for safety, need for love, need for acceptance, and need for self-identity acceptance. In the past, the hierarchy of needs might have been arranged in hierarchical order as theorized from 1-5 but nowadays it the needs are not in that order. In this case, the researcher has noted that the five hierarchy of needs in this order of human beings could not have longer been ranked from 1 to 5, due to the change in values and eras. These various factors have caused human beings to depend on different basic needs in life. On the other hand, people might need two distinct things at the same time because of the expectation on the highest benefit, which a person should receive, such as the benefits of the basic needs (physiological) for a feeling of confidence and pride (esteem) to be admired by surrounding society. The researcher has realized this point as a relation to the process of analyzing the behavior of information exposure that audiences use to determine the content, and knowledge of the business owners to meet their needs. This determination may differ owing to a matter of love, lifestyle, and health care. The audiences

can later adapt the ideas and knowledge they have previously received to inspire their way of life.

Moreover, (Everett Rogers as cited in Wilcox and Cameron, 2006, p.188) has offered new ideas and products that can affect the content exposure process in five groups. First, relative advantage, which audiences involve their personal proits and consider the information given as a substitute, knowledge, and a better idea. Secondly, compatibility, in which audiences consider and compare new information with their existed awareness. The information from such options must also be compatible to their expectations in value and the level of quality. Thirdly, complexity, which is a degree of complexity of the new data and whether it has been delivered to be easily understood. Fourthly, trialability, which is a level of opportunity to do an experiment. Easy-to-understand information on the target audience is a key to drive the content exposure process. And lastly, observability, which additional benefits must be clearly noticed by target audiences as well as others.

The above-mentioned factors are a necessary detail for public relations officers to understand as it will help to facilitate a strategic planning and a selection of communication channels for the most efficiency.

Conceptual Framework for Building Personal Branding

Brand or brand building is recently not limited to only the brand building of products or service. Chirawattanasate (2014). Branding is also important to make a person become famous and accepted because it is an "image of remembrance." When hearing the name, audiences can recognize and have a feeling toward the person's picture based on their perceptual experience.

Building personal branding, Thammarak (2011, p.109) is the creation of a personal identity that can stimulate a response and affect emotional meaning of the audience or others toward the value or quality of a person and the business that the person is doing. In addition, creating a personal branding further refers to the image that the person wants to convey to public.

Chirawattanasate (2014) has summarized David McNally & Karl D. Speak's 6 Personal Branding Processes that 1) personal brand manifesto or the significance of telling who you are and how you look like, uniqueness and life goal has a possibility to make people remember; 2) personal brand dimensions consist of roles and relationship dimension with different people as well as an establishment of acceptance standard for what you do and for your personality; 3) personal brand platform emphasizes that a person's brand must have clear policies or guidelines with a clear personality which the brand has defined; 4) brand naming informs that the brand owner must choose a different and creative name with a correlation to the reflection of the brand; 5) brand architecture or blueprint tells that this person's brand is an architecture in communication through personality, dress, and etc, which is important to ask a question how do we create a brand and its elements to help communicating and

conveying the brand's story; and 6) brand identity is conveying and presenting one's idiosyncrasies to build an awareness, a reminiscence, and a recall of a unique self-image or unique identity.

Meaning and Concept of Image

It is indicated that image means an image of organization, agency, or institution owing to an opinion of the target audience and/or the involved public. It further depends on various behaviors of organizations, agencies, institutions that the target people and/or the public are aware of. Additionally, the formation of an image of an organization, agency, or institution requires time and public relations mechanism (Puksawat, 2013, p.32).

(Lohachala, 1997, p.83) has discussed the creation and maintenance of the image of individuals and organizations. The image of any person depends on the experience, information, or news that people receive. Meanwhile, the image can be impressive or not due to the behavior. For this reason, image can always be built and changed.

Image is public relations according to Philip Lesly (Lohachala, 1997, pp.83-84). "A good public image, in other words, is public relations by creating a positive understanding and relationship with the target groups whom they are involved with, and it is a work that must be done continuously." All of these following elements can affect a creation of a positive image:

1. appropriate personal personality,

2. planning and defining the desired image scope which must be in people's minds,

3. sufficiently effective techniques in creating an image to attract attention or influence general public to perceive the desired image, and

4. having a friendly characteristic.

Public relations using numerous tools and media to initiate the image, must consider the target audience for obtaining effective and appropriate media, content, and strategies.

Smith (2005, p.118) has explained persuasive communication approaches in the Strategic Planning for Public Relations textbook by relying on the template of Rhetoric Tradition in developing a communication strategy for public relations. The three key elements in planning a communication strategy and details are shown in the Picture No. 1.
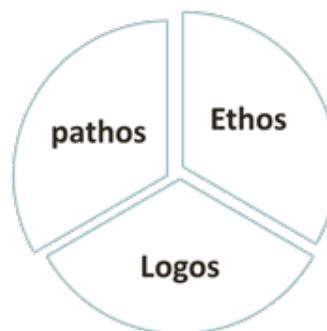
Picture No. 1 The picture shows the elements of the rhetorical principle

The researcher has applied the principles of Ethos: Convincing Communicators (attractiveness of the messenger) for the analysis. The principles emphasize that personality and the unique communication skills of the messenger are important components which will encourage the credibility and attraction of the content. However, these contents can be carried out only by particular people, while other environmental factors are associated with the level of attraction of the messenger.

The factors involved with the messenger as mentioned by Smith (2005, p.118) consist of the sender's credibility, charisma, and controlling power.

Therefore, the researcher believes that personal media is a communication channel that can form credibility and awareness as well as affects the changing of attitudes, especially if the person's media is favored, admired and respected among the target group's point of view. The researcher has employed this principle as one of the tools to analyze the image and qualities of the online influencers.

Research Methodology
Data Collection Method

1. The study from documents, textbooks, and other related research on the communication of online influencers, image building and personal brand image building, as well as the collection of other relevant information.

2. Content analysis to describe, interpret, or explain the "message" obtained from data collection. This content analysis includes the characteristics of the messengers, inspira-tions, objectives of communication, and relevant contexts such as the participation of the audience. In addition to the content analysis, the researcher has compared the similar and different dimensions of communication among the eight sample influencers.

3. In-depth interview using purposive sampling based on the qualifications of online influencers to draw out the information that can be analyzed and can bring the greatest benefit to those who are interested. The researcher has then selected a specific sample group of eight people with specific qualifications, which can guarantee that the selected samples have steadily contributed content to followers and has created interactions during their communication. These qualifications are:

• being an online influencer.

• owning a business and/or being a business executive of a beauty or health business organization.

• using social media platforms such as Facebook and Youtube as channels to educate and/or share experiences continuously for at least 12 months and in the period of 2019-2020

• obtaining a group of followers on social media channels including Facebook and Youtube which are the most popular social media channels for delivering video, image and article content.

Tools for Data Collection

1. In-Depth Interview with the eight samples according to the designed question structure.

2. Content analysis obtained by collecting data from the sample group

3. Data collection from related documents

Result of the Research

The main objective of this research is "to study the strategies of using social media as a communication channel for building the image of online influencers who is currently an executive or brand owner", therefore, to the results are meant to respond this objective. The result of the study, based on data analysis with a qualitative research study approach, has been examined in a descriptive pattern and divided into three parts.

Part 1 is communication strategies on social media platforms to encourage a change in attitude of the target group. After collecting information from all eight online influencers, the samples have been categorized in to three groups according to their expertise and content presented on the media.

Group 1: online influencers or opinion leaders for beauty

Group 2: online influencers or opinion leaders for health

Group 3: online influencers or opinion leaders for capability and self-improvement

Interviews and data that the samples have presented through personal online channels, have revealed that each person has made different dimensions of demonstration, which can be called a strategy for presenting expertise.

Table No. 1 Summary of Expertise of the Samples

Interviewee	Opinion Leader for Beauty	Opinion Leader for Health	Opinion leaders for capability and self-improvement
Interviewee A	/		/
Interviewee B		/	/
Interviewee C	/		/
Interviewee D		/	/
Interviewee E		/	/
Interviewee F		/	/
Interviewee G	/		/
Interviewee H	/		/

Their interests have been diverse and interesting so that their followers have not been bored. Rather than being an opinion leader, holding specialized knowledge is also prominent as it will contribute to the credibility of any story on their platforms. In addition, each influence has relied on a common feature which is creating an image of being a person who has earned thought-development and self-improvement skills or the determination to constantly learn and develop oneself. The data below shows an expertise of the samples.

The common feature of building a self-image is consistent with the principle that Philip Lesly has stated that "building a good image, in other words, is public relations by creating a good understanding and relationship with the target groups whom they are involved with, and it must be continuously done" Lohachala (1997, p.83).

Employing various tools and media in creating the image in performing public relations, we must consider the target audience as well as any other groups of people, and we must choose appropriate and effective media, content, and strategies for these target groups. This consideration can later reflect the credibility of an influential person and an opinion leader. In addition to the knowledge and expertise that the influencers must have, they must develop their capability in all aspects for example, technology, modernity, new knowledge, and etc. The advanced skills can further construct trust and keep the target audiences' interest toward the influencers.

Part 2 is a content design and an influence on the process of selecting to expose. It is generally known for public relations content creators that content is the king. The absence of an ability to design proper content to capture attention, even there are many communication channels, might cause a large problem on communication and a massive impact on the audience for an exposure behavior and lifestyle. The information in Part 1 of the eight social media influencers has reflected a connection with Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory (Fraser, 2007, p.69). The researcher has earlier referred that human

nowadays do not require only basic needs as in the past, but also need love and acceptance. The result of the current social conditions has caused the change in standards or levels of people's needs. Although this research has not studied the followers of each influencer, but it has been found from the interviews with the eight online influencers that followers have aimed to fulfill the missing parts of themselves and to raise up their confidence, for example, by learning from different tutorial video clips on how to exercise and the right way to lose weight must be presented by an influencer with an expertise. It has been disclosed that followers have watched their influencers rather than only to entertain themselves. Moreover, the followers have also viewed these influencers for inspiration, in search of a role model, to learn to love and respect themselves the way they are, to solve health problems, and etc. The researcher believes that each follower might have acquired numerous preferences depending on the situation in life at the time, whether life requires acceptance, or an increased self-confidence or self-respect, or many other different factors that have kept followers attach to content and these online influencers.

Part 3 is building a personal brand image. This part will reflect how to create a memorable personal brand image of the eight influencers in a unique methods based on David McNally & Karl D. Speak's personal branding process.

Mentioning a Personal Brand

The eight samples have been greatly clear in terms of personality, uniqueness and

life goals, which can make people remember. These special characteristics have been conveyed through various elements in the presentation such as clothing, language usage, gesture, and the subject matter of the story that has delivered the uniqueness.

Dimensions of the Personal Branding

The sample group has put a lot of emphasis on building engagement with their followers, which can generate a relationship, and an image of friendliness, sincerity and easy accessibility.

Table No. 2 Relationship Pattern with Followers

Name of Influencer	Channel	Name of Channel/ Facebook Page	Pattern of Presentation
Interviewee A	Youtube	Youtube Channel A	Make herself as an audience
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page A	
Interviewee B	Youtube	Youtube Channel B	Seen as a brother, the followers found this as attractive, therefore the influencer is a common brother for everyone, called "national brother"
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page B	
Interviewee C	Youtube	Youtube Channel C	Most followers find the influencer as an idol and a mother, but some adult followers have no comment toward the content
Interviewee D	Youtube	Youtube Channel D	Communication through community -base by organizing an open house letting people listen to some updates
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page D	
Interviewee E	Youtube	Youtube Channel E	Use credibility, provide information that is not often mentioned, and talk about health issue that general people face but do not think about it
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page E	
Interviewee F	Youtube	Youtube Channel F	Friendship and family relation that everybody can consult, and the influencer himself tries to ignore his special capability
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page F	
Interviewee G	Youtube	Youtube Channel G	A friend-like personality, sincere in responding, with a charming chracteristic
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page G	
Interviewee H	Youtube	Youtube Channel H	Friend
	Facebook Page	Facebook Page H	

The tactic they have used is creating their own names and channel name (Youtube and Facebook) that have been unique and creative. The table below shows the relationship patterns between influencers and their followers.

The table has represented that each sample has relied on a similar theme which is a relationship with their followers in terms of friendship, trust, and credibility. These factors can support further development of the relationship. Precisely, the followers can become a support group who do not only recommend other people to follow or get to know these influencers but will also lead to the purchase of products and service. Furthermore, the eight influential people also have had a clear identity for the guidelines or policies for presenting content as well as the personality (blueprint). If the communication strategies in this manner has not been based on sincerity, it would have been complicated to establish a creativity in making the difference. And in the end, credibility would not have been existed as the content would have only been the trend, or for marketing purpose, sales, or business growth. This can directly affect the image and positive reputation of the executive. Most importantly, influencers need to continually develop themselves and the content to be up-to-date and contemporary. The last significant component is naming. The eight samples have initiated different names. There have been both names given at birth and re-establish names of the architecture or blueprint of a personal branding. The personal brand identity of the eight samples has also been unquestionably clear. In addition to communication strategies through Facebook and YouTube, the researcher has further discovered that Instagram and other social media communication channels as well as offline activities have also been important in increasing the efficiency of communicating the image of the samples. Apart from presenting content of knowledge and expertise, these opinion leaders could have created memories through photos in Instagram account, which is highly effective. Instagram has been another channel that the researcher has perceived as interesting as for further study. Many of samples have confirmed that they could have successfully built their own personal brand image via Instagram because it has been a popular channel of communication through photographs that is easy to realize. Besides, Instagram has tried to add new features with a purpose of allowing content creators and influencers to engage with more followers than ever before. have successfully built their own personal brand image via Instagram because it has been a popular channel of communication through photographs that is easy to realize. Besides, Instagram has tried to add new features with a purpose of allowing content creators and influencers to engage with more followers than ever before.

Table No. 3 Summary of The Personal Branding Process

Interviewee	Informing about the Personal Branding	Standard of the Image	Pattern of Relationship with the Follower and Pattern of Presentation
Interviewee A	Review products and share experience in developing personality of beauty and lifestyle	Devotion and sincerity: make sure to give audiences knowledge	An audience-be-like style
Interviewee B	Educate about health care and exercise by defining his own business as a fitness educator	Being fair to the audience: present content in accordance with the needs of followers, and provide quality content and strategic communication	Seen at as a brother, the followers found this as attractive, therefore the influencer is a common brother for public, called "national brother"
Interviewee C	Offer entertainment with knowledge, review products, and share experiences about the development of personality for beauty, and lifestyle, and presenting works about make-up	Creative idea in work which can be transferred and formed a viral content	Most followers find the influencer as an idol and a mother, but some adult followers have no comment toward the content
Interviewee D	Update knowledge and new story about the development of a person's capability, build a community on social media, and let people find inspiration about work	Sufficiently wide and most accurate content covered, while the layout and the use of colors are uniquely set by personal judgment	Community-based communication by organizing an open house letting listen to some updates
Interviewee E	To help herself continually understand and practice and to help people to be healthy	Review products based on fact with clear position, no intention on risky groups	Use credibility to present topics that are not widely mentioned, and general problems that people face but fail to notice
Interviewee F	Share personal practice, a method to lose weight and maintain body shape	Truth, honesty, self-identity and sincerity	Friendship and family relation that everybody can consult, without attention to special capability

Interviewee	Informing about the Personal Branding	Standard of the Image	Pattern of Relationship with the Follower and Pattern of Presentation
Interviewee G	Share experience to make people come up with ideas, in terms of lifestyle and make-up, people can bring stories from these first-hand experiences for further development	Minimal, but luxurious: recognition through the unity	A friend-like personality, sincere in responding, which makes a charming characteristic
Interviewee H	To make society better, followers can take this as an example.	Passion /Quality/responsibility: everything is based on sincerity and completeness, what is important is to make better things	Friend

The above data has revealed that communication to build personal brand image is absolutely significant. In this 21st century, the advancement of technology, marketing system, production system, and importing products can result to a higher ability of producing products as well as a change in way of life, values and economic situation. Therefore, there have recently been more people starting to do their own business with a model focusing only on a niche market (small group of people) who has the same interests and can afford to buy. Thus, the strategy of designing messages and communicating through social media is an excessive influential communication strategy, which has a level of access to only groups of people with similar interests. If more information is collected from people doing business with social media channels, the researcher believes that there will be a diversity of communication strategies occurring with a style of presentation and specific content design.

Consequently, it can create recognition in the target audiences and lead them to become supporters.

What the researcher has further noticed about the personal brand image from the data collection was that the eight samples have focused on creating a clear and distinct personality to be easily remembered and to be a more effective messenger. However, before the process of image recognition occurs, the process of identity creation and the personal brand must be sufficiently obvious. Moreover, presenting self-honest is the approach which the sample group has thought that leaders or content creators must focus on. Meanwhile, health or beauty business owners must value sincerity, consistency, continuity, self-being, and self-improvement in their presentation. They must not stop learning to develop, to keep themselves in the trend, to keep up with the situation and to be able to always engage the followers.

Content design tactics are the key to participation in which each sample has utilized a similar theme in relation with their followers. They have provided a friendship relation as well as trust and credibility. Thus, this will contribute to further development of relationships in other ways. In the end, what the researcher has recognized was creating competitive advantages in business and marketing in the 21st century. The image of the business executive or the owner is another remarkable factor that will help promoting brand and organization to be unique and reliable. Nevertheless, creating brand image must not rely only on proactive strategy through the mainstream media or offline media but the brand must build a personal brand image through social media. The report on the behavior of using media, which has been mentioned in Chapter 1, has obviously displayed that business executives or business owners need to present themselves more online. In this case, the communication strategy may be adapted to the personality of each executive or business owner. This research has demonstrated the strategies on how to use online media as a channel to raise engagement and build a good relationship with the target audience by sharing knowledge and experience, and how the opinion leaders build credibility for themselves and their business.

Recommendation

The researcher has explored that there are other online media channels which can affect the image of the executive or business owner and are interesting to be studied.

Instagram is a channel that the researcher has repeatedly referred to in this research because the samples have confirmed that it has been profoundly effective to build a pleasant image for themselves. Therefore, the future study may find other possible channels in building a personal brand image for the analysis.

In addition, quantitative data may be collected to consider about the attitudes or benefits that follower receive from those research samples whether it is consistent with what the influencers have planned, or what the real perception of the brand image is. In this case, the real perception may or may not correspond with what the opinion leaders have intended to present.

Finally, the researcher sincerely hopes that this research will be useful for those who are interested. Diverse communication strategies that have been suggested by the samples can be applied and must be done frequently as it is the core of public relations. Additionally, sincerity and continuity will always maintain a constructive image with the organization.

Finally, the researcher sincerely hopes that this research will be useful for those who are interested. Diverse communication strategies that have been suggested by the samples can be applied and must be done frequently as it is the core of public relations. Additionally, sincerity and continuity will always maintain a constructive image with the organization.

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